

LITERATURE REVIEWS

Readers are invited to submit reviews of current literature relating to origins. Mailing address: ORIGINS, Geoscience Research Institute, 11060 Campus St., Loma Linda, California 92350 USA. The Institute does not distribute the publications reviewed; please contact the publisher directly.

ONE SIDE OF THE QUESTION

HOW LIFE BEGAN. Roy A. Gallant. 1975. NY: Four Winds Press. 214 p.

Reviewed by R. H. Brown, Director, Geoscience Research Institute

Individuals who wish to understand the full range of viewpoints in the resurgence of interest in creationism may expect to find this book worth careful study. The author begins by pointing out man's deep-rooted need for an explanation of origins and the evidence that many people are time-haunted. He makes a significant observation that "Man's remarkable talent for inventing myths is surpassed only by his ability to believe in them" (p 8). This is an observation which the reader will do well to keep in mind throughout his study of the book.

One of the more valuable features of *How Life Began* is its summary of creation myths. In this summary the author takes the position that Hebrew ideas of creation and a universal flood were obtained from the Babylonians (p 47), that the book of Genesis was written in the middle of the *first* millennium before Christ (p 37), that the author of the first chapter of Genesis intended the entire universe to be included in the events portrayed there (p 37, 40), and that the second chapter was written approximately 350 years *earlier* than the first chapter (p 42).

With only a casual reading it is apparent that Mr. Gallant has based this book on the philosophical premises that characterize current anthropology and geology. According to his understanding, Copernicus contradicted the Bible regarding motion of the earth (p 66), and religious faith prevented many 19th-century scientists from reasoning objectively and correctly interpreting the fossil record (p 105). He speaks of "the unmistakable sequence of events that Darwin could read in the fossil record" (p 138).

Pages 165-170 contain a valuable analysis of the situation with respect to teaching creationism in the public schools.

The approach to radiometric dating that is taken by many contemporary proponents of creationism is described as similar to the long-discredited view of fossils presented by P.H. Gosse in *Omphalos* (p 185). Such

treatment of radiometric dating may be considered as the Achilles heel of a creation movement which utilizes it.

The author of *How Life Began* seems to rely on quotations from the distinguished geneticist Theodosius Dobzhansky to express his own basic viewpoints. Two examples may be cited:

'Evolution as a process that has always gone on in the history of the earth can be doubted only by those who are ignorant of the evidence or are resistant to evidence, owing to emotional blocks or to plain bigotryThere are no alternatives to evolution as history that can withstand critical examination' (p 150-187).

'The organic diversity becomes reasonable and understandable if the Creator has created the living world not by caprice but by evolution propelled by natural selection. It is wrong to hold creation and evolution as mutually exclusive alternatives. I am a creationist and an evolutionist Evolution is God's, or Nature's, method of Creation. Creation is not an event that happened in 4004 B.C.; it is process that began 10 billion years ago and is still under way' (p 186, 187).

Some readers will see this book as a skillful attempt to neutralize efforts to introduce creation into the public-school curriculum, particularly a creation viewpoint that is based on the first portion of the book of Genesis. While the treatment given by Mr. Gallant is brief and severely limited with respect to the broad range of evidence and issues involved in the treatment of origins in public schools, it makes a helpful contribution toward understanding the thinking of an influential segment of our society on this complex topic.